

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 165363

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN, US

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH DCMLA KHAN'S DISCUSSION WITH DEPUTY
SECRETARY

1. SUMMARY: BANGLADESH DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINI-
STRATOR (DCMLA) KHAN VISITED WASHINGTON PRIOR TO ATTENDING
THE INTERNATIONAL NAVAL REVIEW IN NYC. IN DISCUSSION WITH
DEPUTY SECRETARY, KHAN ATTACKED INDIAN INTRANSIGENCE OVER
FARAKKA BARRAGE DISPUTE AND COMPLAINED ABOUT CONTINUING
BORDER INCURSIONS. HE ASKED IN A LOW-KEY MANNER FOR USG
DIPLOMATIC HELP IN BRINGING INDIA AROUND TO AMICABLE SOLU-
TIONS AND IMPLIED A NEED FOR U. S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT.
ROBINSON EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR BANGLADESH'S PROBLEMS IN
BOTH AREAS. HE SAID WE WOULD STUDY BANGLADESH'S EQUIPMENT
NEEDS CAREFULLY, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF COMMUNTCATIONS
AND TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT. DISCUSSION WITH AID ADMINI-
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STRATOR PARKER BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY.

2. DCMLA ADMIRAL M. H. KHAN HELD 30-MINUTE DISCUSSION WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY ROBINSON JULY 1 WHICH CONTINUED WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS AFTER MR. ROBINSON WAS CALLED AWAY. KHAN SAID HE WANTED TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA AS FAR AS BANGLADESH AND INDIA WERE CONCERNED. BANGLADESH UNDERSTANDS ITS GEOPOLITICAL POSITION AND WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDIA, BUT THE GOI DOES NOT SEEM TO WANT TO RECIPROCATE. KHAN EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT "FRIENDLY PERSUASION" APPLIED BY THE U. S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES MIGHT HELP BRING ABOUT AN AMICABLE SOLUTION TO THE MAJOR PROBLEMS, NAMELY DIVISION OF THE GANGES WATER AND BORDER CLASHES.

3. REGARDING INDIA'S DIVERSION OF GANGES WATER AT FARAKKA, KHAN STATED THAT RIVER LEVELS IN BANGLADESH HAD DROPPED FROM A NORMAL 27-28 FEET TO 17-18 FEET FOLLOWING THE BEGINNING OF INDIAN WITHDRAWALS LAST YEAR. HE SAID SALINITY WHICH USUALLY STARTS AT KHULNA WAS BEING DETECTED 70-80 MILES FURTHER NORTH, AND THAT IF THE BARRAGE REMAINS IN FULL OPERATION NEXT YEAR THE SALINITY COULD BECOME PERMANENT. HE POINTED OUT ON A MAP A LARGE SECTION OF THE GANGES DELTA AFFECTED BY DROPPING WATER TABLES, LOSS OF RIVER TRANSPORT AND INCURSION OF SALINITY.

4. TURNING TO THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT WITH INDIA, KHAN ARGUED FOR AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON A PERMANENT SOLUTION, AFTER WHICH THE DETAILS OF AN INTERIM SETTLEMENT WOULD BE EASY TO WORK OUT. HE SAID BANGLADESH FAVORED A SOLUTION WHICH WOULD ENCOMPASS THE ENTIRE GANGES BASIN, INCLUDING NEPAL. IN CONTRAST, KHAN SAID THE INDIANS PROPOSED TO TAKE WATER FROM THE BRAHMAPUTRA TO SUPPLEMENT THE GANGES FLOW ABOVE FARAKKA. KHAN SAID THIS WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO BANGLADESH FOR TWO REASONS: (A) THE PROPOSED DAM ON THE BRAHMAPUTRA AS WELL AS THE LINK-UP WITH THE GANGES WOULD BE ON INDIAN TERRITORY AND THEREFORE UNDER EXCLUSIVE INDIAN CONTROL, (B) THE LINK CANAL WOULD RUN PRIMARILY THROUGH BANGLADESH TERRITORY DESTROYING A LARGE AREA OF BANGLADESH'S SCARCE ARABLE LAND. BANGLADESH BELIEVES SUCH A CANAL IS UNNECESSARY BECAUSE THERE IS ADEQUATE WATER IN

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THE GANGES BASIN IF IT WERE PROPERLY MANAGED AND FAIRLY DIVIDED.

5. ASKED BY ROBINSON IF BANGLADESH HAD GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO INVITING IN SOME SORT OF INTERNATIONAL REVIEW GROUP TO SUGGEST A SOLUTION, KHAN SAID THE BDG WOULD LIKE "ALL AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTS" TO DO WHAT WAS POSSIBLE. HE SAID HE WAS NOT SUGGESTING PRESSURE ON INDIA BUT--AGAIN--

THAT "FRIENDLY PERSUASION" MIGHT HELP. KHAN SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT A SOLUTION CAN BE FOUND ONLY IF BANGLADESH AND INDIA COME TO AGREEMENT, BUT THAT WHILE TALKS ARE GOING ON TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

6. ROBINSON ASSURED KHAN THAT WE ARE SYMPATHETIC TO BANGLADESH'S PROBLEM. HE COMMENTED THAT WITH THE ADVENT OF THE MONSOON THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME TIME FOR THE PARTIES TO SEEK A SOLUTION. ROBINSON CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT IT WAS A NEW PROBLEM TO HIM AND THAT IT WAS VERY HELPFUL TO HAVE THE ADMIRAL'S VIEWS.

7. ADMIRAL KHAN THEN TURNED TO THE PROBLEM OF BORDER INCURSIONS WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN OCCURRING SINCE JANUARY. KHAN SAID ONLY 500-600 PEOPLE SEEMED TO BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED, BUT THAT THEY WERE BACKED UP BY TRIBAL PEOPLE IN THE AREA AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, BY THE INDIAN BORDER SECURITY FORCES. KHAN SAID DISCUSSIONS AND JOINT INQUIRIES WITH THE INDIANS HAD PRODUCED NO RESULTS BECAUSE THE INDIANS REFUSE TO ADMIT THAT THERE IS ANY PROBLEM AT ALL. ASKED WHAT THE SOLUTION MIGHT BE, KHAN SAID IF THE BANGLADESHIS WERE STRONG ENOUGH THEY WOULD TAKE REPRISALS. KHAN SAID BANGLADESH WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO DEFEND ITSELF BECAUSE OF A LACK OF ARMS. HE COMPLAINED SPECIFICALLY THAT THE SOVIETS HAD STOPPED SUPPLYING SPARES FOR AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS. HE SAID BANGLADESH PARTICULARLY NEEDS MOBILITY FOR ITS FIGHTS WITH "NATURE" AS WELL AS OTHER ENEMIES.

8. ROBINSON REPLIED THAT WE WERE SYMPATHETIC TO BANGLADESH'S NEEDS. HE SAID THAT WITHIN THE LIMITS OF OUR POLICY AS WE SEE THEM WE WOULD LIKE TO BE HELPFUL, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION EQUIPMENT. ROBINSON SAID HE WAS AWARE THAT BANGLADESH WAS PURCHASING

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SOME EQUIPMENT FROM OTHER SOURCES AS WELL. HE ASSURED KHAN THAT WE WILL LOOK AT BANGLADESH'S REQUESTS CAREFULLY, ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, AND DO WHAT IS APPROPRIATE, PROPER AND WITHIN THE RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED BY CONGRESS. KISSINGER

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